

The Return of Jesus

“For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2)

In the spring of the year A.D. 33, forty days after God raised his son Jesus from the dead, a small group of people walked along the road that led from Jerusalem to Bethany. Not far from Bethany, on the eastern slope of the mount of Olives, the one who led them paused and the others gathered around him and began to ask questions. One question was foremost in the minds of all.

*“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”*¹

The one who answered their questions was Jesus. Those around him were the eleven apostles and a few of his disciples, including his mother Mary and the women who, forty days earlier, came to the tomb before dawn and found that God had already raised his son from the dead. (Luke 24:1-10)

This question concerning the kingdom was not new. For the words “kingdom” and “Messiah” (anointed) revived the hope of deliverance from the bondage of Roman rule. When Joseph and Mary brought the babe Jesus to Jerusalem (in the month Tishri, B.C. 2), the aged prophet Simeon took the child up in his arms and thanked God for having finally seen the one who would be a *“light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”* (Luke 2:25-32).²

And the prophetess Anna, on the same occasion, gave thanks to the Lord and began speaking to others about the child Jesus and the deliverance of Israel that would come through him.

Thirty years later, when John the Baptist began preaching near Jordan, the people were still in *“expectation”* and debated whether or not John was the Christ (Luke 3:15). *“Expectation”* of what? That were expecting, they were hoping, that Messiah would come to restore the kingdom to Israel and deliver his people from the bondage of the Roman yoke.

Shortly after Jesus began to preach, some of his disciples who had been watching and listening to him pray, came to him and said, *“Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples.”* (Luke 11:1) The very first petition in the prayer that he taught them again stirred their hope for the kingdom.

“... thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.” (Luke 11:2)

No wonder that the little group gathered around Jesus there on the road to Bethany were again asking . . . *“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?”* (Acts 1:6)

It is recorded in Luke’s gospel (Luke 24:51) that when Jesus had led them as far as Bethany, he raised his hands and blessed them, then slowly ascended until the clouds hid him from their view. In silence they continued to gaze at the clouds where they had last seen him. Not a word was spoken. Perhaps the occasional song of a bird and the distant barking of a dog in the village of Bethany, were the only sounds to break the silence.

Suddenly, two angels, appearing as men dressed in white (Acts 1:10) spoke to them.

“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

The angels disappeared, and the group started back toward Jerusalem. As they walked, perhaps some were thinking about the contrast between the events of this day and what had happened on this same road less than seven weeks earlier. For it was on the 10th of Nisan, five days before Passover (John 12:1, 12) that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah (Zech. 9:9) when he rode from Bethpage into Jerusalem, *“... riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”* And on that day a multitude accompanied Jesus, waving palm branches and shouting Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel. . . .

But now, just six weeks later, only a few of our Lord’s disciples were witness to the reality that Jesus had ascended into heaven, there to be seated at the right hand of his Heavenly Father.

Almost two thousand years have gone by since that day in the spring of A.D. 33. And it can again be said that there is *“expectation”* among those who seek to understand Bible prophecy. Many Christians *“expect”* Jesus to soon return, because they see the social and economic turmoil that is shaking all nations and recognize that these are signs which the scriptures relate to the second presence of our Lord.

Those who study the Bible to learn what the scriptures say about our Lord’s return, generally ask themselves three questions. (1) WHY does Jesus return? Does he return just to receive his church and pronounce a judgment upon the rest of mankind? (2) HOW does he return? In what manner? As a spirit being? In human form? Many scriptures must be considered and harmonized to answer this question – including the statement of the two angels to the little group of disciples near Bethany, *“this same Jesus . . . will so come in like manner.”* And finally, (3) WHEN does Jesus return? The questions HOW and WHEN are important to all who look for his coming. But the first question, WHY, is even more important – especially to those who want to know more about God’s plan.

God’s plan? What is God’s plan for those who have become true disciples of Jesus during the centuries since he died on the cross? What is God’s plan for all mankind? What is God’s plan for the planet earth that he created and pronounced as *“very good”*? (Gen. 1:31)

The understanding of WHY Jesus returns is a key that unlocks the scriptural answers to these questions.

WHY JESUS RETURNS

Jesus returns to accomplish many things. Detailed discussion of all things that happen

after he returns, however, are subjects of other studies. Here, we only present a summary of the events that occur during his second presence, and then briefly consider scriptures that describe some of them.

- Jesus will resurrect and “receive” his church – those who responded to the message of the gospel and became faithful followers in the *“narrow way that leads to life”* (John 14:3 and Matthew 7:14)

- He will re-gather God’s chosen people, Israel, from the nations where they have been scattered. (Ezekiel 36:24-28) They will be returned to the land that God promised to them, and he will *“plant them and not pluck them up.”* (Amos 9:15 and Jeremiah 24:6).³

- He will bind Satan, the great deceiver and god of this present world, so that he no longer can deceive the people. (Genesis 3:4; John 8:44; Revelation 20:2)

- As *“king of kings”* and the *“prince of peace,”* Jesus will judge among the nations and cause war and the learning of war to cease. (Isaiah 2:4). He will tear down the unrighteous world of Satan and establish a *“new earth (social order), wherein dwelleth righteousness.”* (2 Peter 3:10-13)

- Those who served God faithfully before the advent of Jesus will be brought forth in a *“better resurrection.”* They will be made *“princes in the earth”* and will lead and instruct mankind in righteousness.⁴ (Hebrews 11:39-40; Psalms 45:16)

- Jesus will *“open the books”* of the Bible unto all mankind and *“turn to the people”* a pure language (understanding). No longer will there be a Babel of ideologies and religions competing for the minds of men.⁵ (Revelation 20:12; Zephaniah 3:9)

- He will bring forth the dead in an orderly *“resurrection,”* continuing until all *“come forth”* from the grave. (John 5:28) And this homecoming of the *“ransomed of the Lord”* (Isaiah 35:10) will not be a return to the anxiety and pain of the world that Satan ruled. It will be a resurrection to the *“new earth”* environment of Christ’s kingdom.

In brief, these are the reasons *WHY Jesus returns!*

Some of these events take place in a relatively short period of time, while others require centuries to complete. Some occur before others, while some are overlapping activities. But none will fail – because Jesus, acting as the right arm of God, will cause them to happen during his thousand-year reign.

The dead will be restored to life. All of the events that we summarized are miracles in the sense that divine power will be used to ensure that none fail. But, surely, the resurrection of the dead stands out above the others. Let us consider what the scriptures say about restoring the dead to life.

Two things make it possible for the dead to be

restored. (1) God sent his son into the world . . . *“that the world through him might be saved.”* (John 3:17) And (2) his son Jesus *“gave himself a ransom for all.”* (1 Timothy 2:6) The Greek word here translated ransom means corresponding price.⁶ And the full meaning of this phrase, *“ransom for all,”* becomes clear when we relate it to the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 5:12: “. . . *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men . . .*”

The *“one man”* is Adam. He disobeyed God – and because of his disobedience, death has passed upon all of his descendants. None have escaped going down into the *“grave”* where there is neither *“work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom”* – for those who are dead *“know not anything.”* (Ecclesiastes 9:10, 5)

However, because the *“man Christ Jesus”* did give *“himself a ransom for all”* (1 Timothy 2:5, 6), all who are in the graves will be restored to life.

John 5:28: “. . . *the hour (time) is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth . . .*”

The resurrection of the dead begins when Jesus returns and continues, in an orderly manner, until all come forth from the graves. The first to be resurrected are those who respond to the message of the gospel and become faithful Christians in the *“narrow way that leads to life.”* (Matthew 7:14) Jesus calls these a *“little flock,”* because they are indeed little compared to the billions of mankind. The apostle Paul calls them the *“church of the firstborn”* (Hebrews 12:23), because they are the first to be resurrected. The apostle James (James 1:18), and the apostle John (Revelation 14:4) call them *“firstfruits.”*

God has a special purpose for those who *“have part in the first resurrection.”* (Revelation 20:6) The work of the church, after Jesus returns and raises them up to be with him, is summarized in these scriptures.⁷

Luke 22:28-30: “. . . *I appoint unto you a kingdom . . . that ye may . . . sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

1 Corinthians 6:2-3: *“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?”*

Revelation 5:9-10: “. . . *for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.”*

Revelation 20:4: *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*

What happens to those who are not “firstfruits”? Paul tells us that there shall be a resurrection both of the *“just and the unjust.”* (Acts 24:15) The just that Paul had in mind are the church, the *“little flock,”* the *“firstfruits.”* By the word unjust, Paul meant the remainder of mankind – the billions who lived and died without any knowledge of God and his son Jesus, because their eyes were blinded by Satan the deceiver.

The apostle John also, using different words,

divides the return of the dead into two parts.

John 5:29: “. . . *they that have done good unto the resurrection of life. And they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”*

The *good* that come forth to life correspond to the just in Paul’s statement. (Acts 24:15) The evil that come forth to damnation correspond to those that Paul called unjust – except for one very important word! The word *“damnation”* does not express John’s thought.

The Greek text, from which the King James Standard version was translated (in the year 1611) uses the word *“krisis”* in four verses of this fifth chapter . . . verses 22, 27, 29 and 30. The translators correctly used the English word *“judgment”* to express the meaning of the Greek *“krisis”* in verses 22, 27 and 30 – but used *“damnation”* in verse 29. This is misleading! The Revised Standard version and many other later translations correct this error.

John is saying, then, that the judging of the church, the *“good,”* takes place during the centuries since our Lord’s first advent. Their trial is over when they are resurrected. But those who are not part of the church will come forth to a time of trial in the day that God planned for judging all of mankind.⁸

The day “appointed” for judging mankind.

Acts 17:30-31: *“God . . . appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained . . .”*

Jesus is a righteous judge. One important function of a judge is to make certain that the defendant receives a fair trial. The judge must make sure that the accused understands why he is on trial, that he understands what must be done to make right the things he has done wrong, and that he understands the things provided for him by the law and the court. For many, the time of trial is a time of learning! The prophet Isaiah said (Isaiah 26:9), “. . . *when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”*

In this great judgment day that God has appointed, none will be judged in ignorance of God’s commandments. For the *“books”* of the Bible *“will be opened.”* (Revelation 20:12) God’s law will be written *“in their hearts.”* (Jeremiah 31:33) This understanding of the *“word of God”* will be a first-time experience for billions of the human race! There will be no deceptions to divert man from a return to righteousness, because Satan will be bound. It is in this *“new earth”* environment that each individual will be judged by Jesus the righteous judge. Those who are found worthy of eternal life will live forever, here upon this earth. Those who are found not worthy of eternal life will die.

Is the day of judgment a “doomsday”?⁹

In times past, some have thought that the day of judgment was a kind of *“doomsday”* for mankind. But when we compare and harmonize the many scriptures that describe the miraculous events of this day, we see that it is a time when the real enemies of mankind – Satan, selfishness, sickness, pain, sorrow and death – will all be destroyed by the power of God. It is indeed a doomsday for these enemies, but not for the human race! (1 Corinthians 15:25, 26 and Revelation 21:1-4)

Things that God has purposed to do cannot fail. His purpose for mankind, and for this earth, will be fulfilled in every detail by Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, during his thousand-year reign. (Genesis 1:26; 1 Timothy 6:14, 15)

These are the reasons WHY Jesus returns!

HOW DOES JESUS RETURN? 10

Consider these statements from the word of God. All relate to our Lord’s return and each tells us something about HOW he returns.

1 Thessalonians 4:16: *“the Lord . . . shall descend from heaven with a shout . . .”*

Revelation 16:15: *“I come . . . as a thief . . .”*

Luke 17:20: *“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation . . .”*

Revelation 1:7: *“Every eye shall see him . . .”*

John 14:19: *“The world seeth me no more . . .”*

Some of these scriptures seem to contradict one another. Because a thief does not come with a shout! And if the world sees Jesus no more, how can every eye see him? However, all of these are the word of God and God does not contradict Himself. How then, do we harmonize these verses that seem to be contradictory?

Let us go back for a moment to the first advent of our Lord. He was born of Mary, but he was not the son of Joseph. (Matthew 1:20) He was a human being and also the son of God. This is not strange. Adam also was a human being and also the son of God. (Luke 3:38)

Adam disobeyed God, lost his right to life, and died. Jesus grew to manhood and then gave his life as a ransom for Adam and all who lost life through Adam’s disobedience. (Romans 5:12)⁶

Early in the morning of the third day after our Lord was placed in the tomb, God resurrected his son Jesus. But God raised him from the tomb as a spirit being — not a human being. Jesus did not *“ascend to the Father”* until forty days after his resurrection. During that time he appeared to his disciples on several occasions, but always with an assumed body, not the body that was laid in the tomb. He appeared to Mary near the tomb and she thought he was the gardener, until he called her name. (John 20:16) He walked eight miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus with two disciples that knew him well — but they did not recognize him, until he broke bread and gave thanks. (Luke 24:30-31) He appeared as a stranger on the shore of Galilee and even Peter did not recognize him until Jesus repeated a miracle that he had performed three years earlier . . . a miracle that caused their net to be filled with fish. (Luke 5:5 and John 21:6)

On two occasions Jesus did assume a body of crucifixion – with holes in the hands and feet and a side that was pierced. Why this body? The Lord did this to help convince those who were disillusioned and grieved by his death that the one who appeared to them was indeed he, Jesus, and not just an angel. For they knew that angels could materialize and appear as men. (Luke 1:11 and Luke 24:36-43)

Jesus has never appeared in human form since he ascended to the Father. He did appear, after his ascension, to the apostle Paul – but his appearance was as a blinding light. (Acts 22:6-8)

Does Christ appear as a man when he returns?¹¹ When Christ returns, should we expect him to appear again in the form of a man as he did during the forty days before he ascended? The Bible indicates that this is not the case.

Christ returns as a spirit being, and remains invisible throughout his thousand-year reign. Thus, his statement *“the world seeth me no more”* (John 14:19) remains a true statement. However, when John wrote (Revelation 1:7), *“every eye shall see him,”* what did he mean? John used the word *“see”* in the sense of comprehend, or understand. *“I see what you mean”* is a phrase often used to express the thought of comprehension or understanding. And Revelation 1:7 is saying, then, that when Christ returns, every eye (mind) will comprehend, will become aware, that he is present – even though he is invisible to the literal eye.

This does not mean an instantaneous, worldwide awareness, but rather a gradual spread of this knowledge – gradual, that is, when compared to an instant of time, but short when compared to centuries of waiting for Christ to return.

What will cause men to become aware that Christ has returned? We note that John used the expression (Revelation 1:7) *“cometh with clouds.”* Clouds are frequently used in the Bible as a symbol of trouble – trouble that stems from worldwide social and economic unrest. The prophet Daniel expressed the thought of Christ's return with the phrase *“Michael shall stand up.”* (Daniel 12:1) And one of the evidences which would cause men to know that the King of Kings had returned to establish his kingdom in the earth would be a *“time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation . . .”* (Daniel 12:1) When the disciples asked Jesus for signs that would identify his return, he quoted this prophecy as one of the signs. (Matthew 24:21)¹²

“The day of the Lord” is a frequently used phrase in the scriptures. This *“day”* begins when our Lord returns. The prophet Joel describes the beginning of this day as a *“time of clouds and thick darkness.”* (Joel 2:2) Christian ministers are more and more calling attention to the Bible prophecies that speak of the trouble associated with Christ's return, and concerned people are giving more thought to the worldwide social and economic problems that are growing more complex and intense each day.

As knowledge of the prophecies become more widespread and as the trouble increases in intensity, and as prophetic fulfillment becomes more vivid, men will begin to *“see”* that the invisible, all powerful, *“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”* has returned amidst *“clouds”* of trouble – trouble that destroys Satan's old order (world) to make way for Christ's righteous kingdom. Then, the words of the prayer that Christians have prayed for centuries will begin to come to pass.

“As a thief” and “with a shout”? How do we harmonize to come *“as a thief”* and to come *“with a shout”*? A thief does not announce beforehand the time of his arrival. His presence is made known by what he does after his arrival. And so it is with the return of Jesus. His presence is made known by the events that take place after he returns.

How does come *“with a shout”* (1 Thess-

alonians 4:16) harmonize with this? The Greek word that Paul used is *keleuma*. Strong's concordance gives the meaning as a *“cry of incitement.”* And *keleuma* comes from the base word *keleuo*, which means to *“incite by word.”* The prophet Daniel said that when *“Michael”* stood up there would be a *“time of trouble,”* many *“running to and fro,”* and *“knowledge shall be increased.”* (Daniel 12:1, 4) This increase of knowledge is not limited to the fields of science and religion – it includes an increase in social awareness that exposes man-to-man inequities which have been *“accepted”* for centuries. Michael standing up is equivalent to Christ, the King of kings returning. (Revelation 17:14) The increased awareness of social and economic inequities is equivalent to a shout, a cry of incitement, that causes many people in all nations to clamor for rights.¹³

Finally, still considering HOW Christ returns, what did the two angels mean when they said to the disciples, *“ . . . this same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven . . . ?”* Their words sound very literal. However, the angels did not mean that Jesus would return and slowly descend from the clouds until his feet again stood on Mount Olivet. A literal, visible, descent from the clouds would be out of harmony with scriptures that we have just considered. However, the Lord's departure and his return do have one thing in common—both occur without fanfare, and both without any prior announcement of the time and place. Had Jesus announced to all Jerusalem the time and place of his ascension, a great crowd would have gathered on Mount Olivet to witness the event. Even his disciples did not know when and where he would leave them. And, of his disciples, only a few were there to watch him ascend to his Father in heaven.¹⁴

The return of Jesus occurs in like manner. There is no fanfare to alert the world for this great event. Why then, do increasing numbers of Christians *“expect”* Jesus to return any day now? Many expect Jesus to return soon because they see the increasing turmoil in the earth as a sign that the end is near. The end is near for the world of Satan (2 Peter 3:10-13) – but not for mankind or the planet earth. The turmoil that is shaking all nations is a sign, but not a sign that Jesus is about to return – it is, rather, one of the evidences that he has returned! . . . WHEN?

WHEN DOES JESUS RETURN?

Forty days after his resurrection and ten days before Pentecost, Jesus ascended into the heavens to be seated at the right hand of his Father. A few weeks after Pentecost, Peter spoke about Jesus to a crowd of Jews on the temple grounds. He told them that God had raised his son, Jesus, from the dead and that Jesus would remain in the heavens *until* the *“times of restitution”* of all things spoken by God's holy prophets. (Acts 3:21) It follows, then that if we can determine from the scriptures a date for the beginning of these *times of restitution*, we will know when our Lord's second presence begins.

Frequently, God overruled the experiences of his people Israel to create types, or shadows, or pictures of greater events to come. (Hebrews 8:1-5) At the time of the Exodus from Egypt, for example, the Passover lamb that each family sacrificed to provide safety for the firstborn of

Israel (Exodus 12:5-13), pictured Jesus, the *“true lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) And some features of the law that God gave Israel at Sinai clearly foreshadow a future time of *restoring*. These, when coupled with Bible chronology, seem to point to a specific date.

Two features that we want to consider are the law of the *sabbath* and the law of the *jubilee*. We suggest that the reader consult the reference material listed for a detailed study of these two features of the law. ^{15,17}

The “seventh” day and the “seventh” year.

Exodus 31:15, 17: *“Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death . . . It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested . . .”*

From these words of the Lord, we can see that he ordained *“keeping”* the seventh day as a *“sign”* – a sign to remind Israel that God had established this pattern when he created heaven and earth. The first chapter of Genesis records this orderly creation of the earth. The account shows that it was accomplished during six creative days or epochs of time. Then on the seventh day, God rested. (Genesis 2:2)

Later, Israel was told to sow the field, prune the vineyard, and harvest the fruit each year for six years – but the seventh year was to be a *“Sabbath of rest unto the land.”* (Leviticus 25:3, 4)

Why the seventh day? Seventh year? Why did God choose to accomplish the Genesis creation in six epochs of time? Why not five, or eight? Why did he rest on the seventh? Why did God instruct his people Israel to hallow the seventh day and seventh year? We believe that these seventh day and seventh year accounts were intended to be types, or pictures, or foreshadows that pointed to a great seventh day of the future.

Why the death penalty? The penalty for disobeying the seventh day commandment was rather severe – death! (Exodus 31:14, 15) In order to harmonize such a severe penalty with a God of love, we must remember that he was creating pictures of events to come. This was God's way of emphasizing the importance of obedience during a greater seventh or Sabbath day to come – a day in which death will no longer come to the individual because the *“fathers have eaten a sour grape.”* (Adam's disobedience) In that day, death will come to the individual only as a result of his own disobedience to God's law that *will be written in the heart.* (Jeremiah 31:29, 30)

Jesus healed on the Sabbath. Why on the Sabbath? Our Lord performed many miracles during the three and one-half years of his ministry. He restored firmness to withered limbs . . . and more. Yet Jesus reached only *some* of the thousands in Judea and Galilee that were blind, or deaf, or sick, or crippled. And all those that he *did* heal died some time later – none escaped the death that came upon men through Adam. What, then, was the purpose of his healing work?

Certainly one purpose was to attract the attention of the multitudes so that they would hear the gospel of the kingdom. But the miracles

were more that that – they foreshadowed a *greater* healing work to come. (John 5:20 and John 14:12) The fact that most of the healing was done on the Sabbath pointed to the greater Sabbath day to come, the thousand years of Christ's reign...the day of judgment...*the times of restitution*. The healing performed by Christ in that great seventh day will be a permanent restoration.¹⁶

Thousand-year days.

Revelation 20:4: "...and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years..."

2 Peter 3:8: "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Detailed studies of Bible chronology and the many time features of God's plan of the ages show that the year 1874 marked the end of six thousand years from the time that Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden. Using the scriptural thought that the Lord considers one thousand years as a day, we see that 1874 also marks the beginning of a seventh one thousand year day. Many Christians believe that this "seventh" day is the great day of restoring which was foreshadowed by the Sabbath day pictures God created. This means that 1874 also marks the beginning of Christ's second presence and the *times of restitution!*¹⁸

The year of jubilee...a time of restoration. Israel was told to begin counting Sabbath year cycles, (that is, cycles of seven years) from the year that Joshua led them across the river Jordan into Canaan. After forty-nine years, or seven Sabbath cycles had elapsed, a very special fiftieth year was to be observed. It was called the year of *jubilee*. (Leviticus 25:9, 10-13) The purpose of this unique feature of God's law for Israel was to restore all things to the conditions that existed at the beginning of the forty-nine year cycle.

If circumstances – such as severe crop failure, for example – forced an Israelite to sell part of his land during the forty-nine years, the new owner could keep the land only until the year of jubilee. Since all Israel lived "off the land," how did a man survive if continued misfortune forced him to sell all of his acreage? When this happened, he became a servant of the new owner, or someone else, and tilled the soil for wages. If this change in ownership and the ensuing bondage to others occurred early in the forty-nine year period, there would be enough years remaining in the cycle to marry and raise a family under conditions of servitude. But in the year of jubilee his land and his freedom were restored. Thus, the jubilee year of *restoring* was a fitting picture of the *times of restitution* of all things spoken by the mouth of God's holy prophets. Time feature studies of the jubilee have shown that the great thousand year jubilee began in the year 1874-1875.¹⁵

Why the name "jubilee"? The word jubilee has come to suggest the thought of joy, rejoicing, jubilation. But the name for Israel's "jubilee" of restoring did not come from the thought of joy or jubilation. The name is from the Hebrew word *yobel*, which means a prolonged blast

from a trumpet or horn. This horn was sounded throughout the land to announce the start of this jubilee year. How fitting it is that the times of restitution, foreshadowed by this jubilee, also begin with the sounding of a symbolic trumpet. (1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:52)

Was the sound of the trumpet a joy to all?

How was this sounding of the ram's horn received by the people of the land? Did everyone rejoice when the jubilee year began? Probably not. Those who had gained the lands and services of others during the forty-nine years would be reluctant to give up these things immediately. Those who had become used to living and working under the direction of others would have many adjustments to make when set free, because freedom entails responsibility. A feeling of confidence and security did not come immediately to those who had become used to a life of bondage. And, if the land changed owners more than once during the forty-nine years, the restoring process was even more complex. The first part of the jubilee year, then, was a time of *social disruption* – a time of mixed emotions and trouble and distress. The full jubilee year was required to accomplish complete restoration.

The *times of restitution* also begin with social disruption, trouble, and distress. But joy will begin to multiply as Christ removes the decay of the old order, Satan's world. It will require one thousand years of Christ's reign to put down all enemies and restore mankind to life and the perfection lost by Adam's disobedience.

WHY ... HOW? ... WHEN? ... What have we learned?

We have learned from the scriptures that Jesus returns to release the billions of mankind from the prison of death, to teach them righteousness, and lead them up the "highway of holiness" to the perfection that was lost when Adam disobeyed God.¹⁵

We have learned from the scriptures that Jesus returns as a mighty spirit being ... the King of kings and Lord of lords ... the Prince of Peace. We learned that his return is like a thief in the night ... he is unseen and unheard by the literal eye and ear. But his symbolic "shout" of incitement arouses the repressed and down-trodden of earth to clamor for rights.

We have learned that the great increase of knowledge, the re-gathering of God's "chosen people" to their land, and the intense social and economic troubles now "shaking all nations" are prophetic signs relating to the return of Jesus. But they are *not* signs that he is *about* to return ... they are signs that he *has* returned – quietly, without outward show – in 1874. The returned "Prince of Peace" will soon say "peace, be still" (Mark 4:39) – and restless humanity will cease its chaotic struggle and begin the return to harmony with God. When we pray the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples, we are asking for things that God has promised! Think about the meaning of the words the next time you pray ...

"... thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven ..."

The Creator of the universe promised this!¹⁹

REFERENCE NOTES

The "reference" numbers used in the text of the study on "The Return of Jesus" correspond to the "note" numbers that follow.

The "Vol" and "page" numbers within the notes refer to Studies in the Scriptures, written by Charles Taze Russell, a dedicated Christian and student of the Bible. Studies in the Scriptures were originally published, in six volumes, during the years 1886 through 1904.

1. Vol 1, p. 89, Our Lord's Return ... Its Object, the Restitution of all things.
2. Vol 2, p. 54, The Date of Our Lord's Birth.
3. Vol 3, p. 243, The Restoration of Israel.
4. Vol 1, p. 288-295, Two Phases of the Kingdom of God.
5. Vol 5, p. 217-218, The General Baptism of the Holy Spirit.
Vol 6, p. 710, "They shall hear the voice of the Son of God..."
6. Vol 5, p. 421, A Ransom for All.
7. Vol 5, p. 478, "They will be under the care ... of the Royal Priesthood ..."
Vol 1, p. 86-88, "But God's plan will not always be shrouded in mystery ..."
8. Vol 6, p. 708-720, "The *anastasis* of the world ..."
9. Vol 1, p. 139-148, The Day of Judgment.
10. Vol 2, p. 103, The Manner of Our Lord's Return and Appearing.
11. Vol 2, p. 121-123, "Though our Lord at his second advent ..."
12. Vol 2, p. 101-102, "The sword of truth already sharpened ..."
13. Vol 2, p. 146, "with a shout"
14. Vol 2, p. 153-158, In like manner ... "this same Jesus ..."
15. Vol 2, p. 173, Earth's Great Jubilee
16. Vol 2, p. 40-41, "Wilt thou be made whole ...?"
17. Vol 2, p. 33, Bible Chronology
18. Vol 2, p. 187-190, "Thousand years of Restitution..."
19. Vol 4, p. 649, Jehovah's Footstool Made Glorious
20. Vol 1, p. 117, The Permission of Evil and Its Relation to God's Plan